DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 089 248 CS 001 024

AUTHOR Holloway, Ruth Love
TITLE Report of the Study Seminar to U.S.S.R., Dec. 7-23, 1973.
INSTITUTION Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Right to Read Program.
PUB DATE Feb 74
NOTE 14p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Comparative Education; *Educational Attitudes; *Educational Philosophy; *Teacher Education; Teacher Education Curriculum
IDENTIFIERS *Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

ABSTRACT

Following a discussion of education in the Soviet Union, this paper relates some observations on teacher education in the U.S.S.R. Among the observations noted are that teacher education as a discipline is controlled by the central government; teachers are prepared similarily for both elementary and secondary levels; teacher preparation occurs in the state universities, pedagological research institutes, and advanced centers and professional growth centers, with the majority of the teachers being educated in the pedagological research institutes; teachers are in an institute for five years and specialize in an area; preference at an institute is given to people who have had experience in the working world; no separate degrees are given and a prospective teacher is required to write a thesis in his area of specialty; prospective teachers by the time of graduation have had at least six months teaching experience; the educational system places high priority on supporting students financially; all graduates are guaranteed a teaching position; school administrators come from the ranks of "best teachers"; and all teachers are required to return for retraining once every five years with pay for attendance. (HOD)

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Ruth Love Holloway
Director
Right to Read Program

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February 22, 1974

Report of the Study Seminar to U.S.S.R.

by

Ruth Love Holloway

General Observations

Traveling and interacting in a country provides a magnificent opportunity to the sensitive, inquisitive observer. Reflecting upon a two week visitation one is at once impressed by the breadth of information encountered and is aware of the need for more depth in fully exploring particular areas of interest.

The trip to the Soviet Union was for me another educational and cultural interchange of enormous proportions. Clearly two types of profound impacts were made. One had to do with the development of a greater appreciation for our system of government and educational establishment. The other impact relates to the opportunity and priviledge of beginning to broaden my understanding of the educational system and idealogies in a nation's vastly different from the U.S.A.

As expected, perceptions developed, sterotypes removed, beliefs confirmed and knowledge increased. While the assigned portion of this report deals with Teacher Education, some general observations serve as a preface:

- Education is indeed a priority, both in terms of financial support and rigorous adherence to standards of achievement. Access to education, pre-school through adult education and including multiple forms of higher education is readily available to the ardent learner. Education appear to be a serious endeavor and thrust for knowledge prevails. Recognizing that education is the road to economic and social progress the Soviets embarked (30 - 40 years ago) upon a campaign to eliminate the 85% illiteracy. Today that figure is reported to be near 1%.

- The school and its related institution appear to be viewed as instruments for transmitting culture and idealogies. Further, they are more concerned with groups vs individuals; citizenry vs participation, conformity vs analysis. Controlled by the central government, these institutions utilize a variety of strategies in inculcating socialist philosophy into the fabrics of its citizens.

- In a country where everything seems to be planned, there is an amazing degree of structuring the lives of people from early years to career selecting. Knowledge of national occupational needs determine where and how people will be educated and employed. While such an organization appears to restrict flexibility and creativity, it serves the purpose of full employment, lack of averages and meets the "common goal" of building a nation.

. In terms of reading, the following observations are highlighted:

1. One method of teaching reading (phonetic) is employed by all teachers who were re-trained at government expense. The highly rated system involves a single set of textbooks designed to "build citizens" and develop skills.
2. After the third grade, reading is perceived of as a tool and is not taught. It was impossible to ascertain how children with reading difficulties were handled, with the exception of the retarded children who are provided for in the defectology institutes.
3. In terms of visible incentives, December 15 is the national day of recognition for first graders who complete the "ABC" book. Children are expected to read a certain number of words per minute.
4. There is no I.Q. text, so that label does not appear to be a problem. One is struck by the high level of expectation on the part of teachers and the performance of children.
5. Teachers are indeed accountable for both the success and failure of children to learn. While individualized instruction is not a concept readily perceived or acknowledge, children progress at varying rates at or above a minimum.
6. The country seems to be a "nation of readers" in that one observes children and adults reading in both formal and informal situations. Book stores and libraries are readily available.

Although there appear to be a paucity of reading materials of the light variety, i.e., novels, foreign books, the historical and technical materials coupled with newspapers and periodicals provide the citizens with both fact and propaganda. The publication of a national newspaper for children attest the degree of stimulation offered in daily reading.

7. Discipline is not a problem for at least two apparent reasons: a) the school is a place for serious learning with teachers who are highly respected, and b) the piercing pressure on parents serves as a corrective device. An extreme example is the practice of writing the parent's employer in the face of continued behavior or learning problems on the part of the child.
8. One cannot help but appreciate the enormous effort expended in the area of bilingual instruction. Textbooks are published in the native language for each of the 126 ethnic groups.
9. The authoritarian nature of the system makes for much conformity and apparently limited analytical thinking. It also provides for uniformity of goals and translation of research findings into classroom practices.
10. The pupil/teacher ratio while verbally indicated as 30 to 1, classroom observations reveal a figure closer to 38 to 1.

Impressions and Observations of Teacher Education in U.S.S.R.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers occupy a prestigeous position in the Soviet Union, a status somewhat analogous to that of American teachers some years ago. This fact, coupled with the priority placed on education, makes for a formidable pedagological system.

In the U.S.S.R. education is indeed the vehicle for upward mobility. Soviet schools represents the State's method of transmitting culture, history and idealogy. Teachers play a central role which in the learning process and assume responsibility and accountability for both success and failure of students.

TEACHER PREPARATION

The growth in education in USSR is apparent and teacher preparation reflects in a large measure the new societal thrusts. The Ministry of Education was formed in 1966 and one year prior to that the Central committee of the Communist Party passed a decree which mandated the improvement of teacher education.

Teacher education as a discipline, is controlled by the central government. There are two Ministeries of Education with similar responsibilities; one the Minister of Education generally and the Minister of Specialized Higher Education. Both Ministries represent the central government and maintain a great deal of control in terms of philosophy which teachers

receive in their preparation. There appears to be two primary concepts which undergird Soviet education, and teacher education is no exception. One has to do with the use of school as an institution or forum for idealogical and political control, and two, the centralization of the entire educational system under the States. In the fifteen republics, it is necessary to maintain uniformity of educational programs. The training of teachers is a major vehicle for accomplishing this purpose.

Teachers are prepared similarily for both elementary and secondary levels. All schools are termed "secondary" although they begin at kindergarten and end at 10th grade.

In the Soviet Union, the preparation of teachers occurs in predominantly three different kinds of institutions:

.The State universities.

.Pedagological Research Institutes

.Advanced centers and professional growth centers.

The majority of teachers, however, are educated in the pedagological research institutes which are developed for the training of teachers. Normally, teachers attend the institute for a period of five years and specialize in either the physical science, mathematics, foreign language, linguistic specialities and in some instances defectology or special education. A limited emphasis is placed upon methods of teaching for teachers of the primary grades. However, heavy emphasis is placed upon subject matter itself.

It is interesting to note that 80% of the teachers in the Soviet Union Institutes are women in a county where 95% of the female population is employed. Similarily most of the medical doctors and dentists are women.

A prime example of an institute is the Hertzen Pedagological Institute in Lenningrad. This Institute represents the first Socialist Pedagological Institute of Higher Education. It was established in 1918 by Lennin and Gorkey. There are many counterparts to this Institute throughout the Soviet Union in every republic. This Hertzen Institute has 800 teaching faculty and over 300 assistants faculty who are candidates for doctorate degrees. The student population is approximately 13,000. Graduates of the Institute receive a diploma in their speciality which certifies them to teach. There is no separate degree such as the BA and the teaching certificate. Prior to graduation a prospective teacher is required to write a thesis in his or her area of speciality. Should a teacher wish to extend his education, he or she may enter a three year post graduate program. Here, they are required to pass an examination and to write a dissertation. After meeting such requirements, the candidates then achieve the right to teach at a university or one of the Institutes.

Preference at the Pedagological Institute is given to people who have had experience in the working world. For example, applicants who have worked two or three years in work production or agriculture receive

greater preference for admission as candidates. In fact, approximately 80 percent of the first year slots are set aside for such candidates. This means that the majority of teachers have had work experience either in factories, farms or elsewhere, prior to their formal preparation as teachers. Military service also is included as working experience.

In addition to the courses mentioned earlier, the foundation classes or social sciences include some psychology, political science and scientific communism. In general, the curriculum for teacher education does not relate to the liberal arts. Foreign language, however, is a requirement for at least two years of the program.

Prospective teachers, by the time of completion or graduation, have had at least six months teaching experience. The first being an internship in the third year . in which they teach under six weeks of supervision. Candidates also work with the "leading" teacher during their fourth year of study. This reflects a kind of on-the-job training prior to receiving the diploma. Teaching candidates are also expected to work with the young pioneers and other such civic and cultural organizations in the community.

In terms of finances, the Soviet System of Education places high priority on supporting students. Here again, the majority of the students receive stipends for their education and are not expected to work. In fact, school is considered a full-time job. There are rigorous standards in

terms of academic achievement and failure to meet such standards may result in a loss of stipend or elimination from the program. Special stipends are provided for honor students as well as students who prefer special education such as defectology.

In terms of placement the graduate of the pedagogical institutes or universities, express a preference, however, placement relates to the area of need. Because the Soviet System is so highly structured and planned many teachers are placed in the priority areas. Teachers accept an assignment for a three year period, and then their work is reviewed in terms of their continuation. There is no tenure as we know it in the United States, however, all graduates are guaranteed a teaching position.

Although it is difficult to ascertain from the discussion just how teachers are prepared to interact with children, one gets the feeling that there is a very "gentle" relationship between student and teacher. In addition to providing good education to the pupils, teachers appear to have a sense of contribution to the society as a whole and to the government.

There is virtually no preparation for school administrators. Such leaders are selected from the ranks of the "best teachers" and are expected to provide staff development for the school faculty.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH (INSERVICE EDUCATION)

Education in the Soviet is considered a life long process. Experienced teachers are expected to take refresher courses and keep current in education policy and procedures. In addition to the regular assignments of working in the school, teachers are expected to discharge a number of extra-curricular activities frequently without renumeration. For example, teachers frequently work in summer camps, pioneer houses, house of culture, where their particular skills are utilized for the total upgrade of the society.

Within the Soviet Union each Republic has at least one Professional Growth Institute or Teachers Center. These are developed primarily for the purpose of providing inservice education for experienced teachers. They are the major instruments for retraining teachers.

An interesting feature of the Soviet Education is the requirement that all teachers return for retraining once every five years. They are given one day a week over the period of one year with pay for attendance at the professional growth institute. In a limited number of cases in rural areas evening or correspondence courses may also satisfy this requirement. While such inservice education seems worthwhile, it is, in fact, a necessity in the Soviet Union for implementing new plans or programs, especially in the area of reading. For example, a few years ago the Soviet Education System instituted a uniform plan for the teaching

of reading. This plan required the retraining of all elementary teachers so that children would be exposed to the uniform system. In addit on to the professional growth institutes, a wide variety of academic and summer programs are provided with emphasis on workshops in curriculum development, etc. The major objective of these as well as the professional growth institutes is the improvement of subject matter in teaching skills.

In terms of reading, the Soviets indicated that there are very few and minor reading difficulties as we know it in the United States. Inquiring into the rationale for success, there appears to be several reasons for the success:

- The phonetic nature of the Soviet languages.
- The government's priority on education. This priority goes far beyond a proclamation.
- The evident teacher expectation of every child as a learner.
- The intensive inservice education.
- The laws which insure education for all children.

From an observation point of view, there are some additional factors which seem to impact upon the success in the teaching of reading. While these cannot be transferred to the United States necessarily, they are mere observations.

It became very clear that teachers, like other professionals who are interested in elevation, find it essential to become an active member of the Communist Party.

Summary and Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Exchange teachers between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. begin with summer programs and move into year long exchange activities.

- The USA encourage pen pal between Soviet and American students, expecially those students involved in intercultural and international clubs.

- The delegation receive briefing long enough prior to departure so as to facilitate in-depth preparation, i.e. reading, small gifts, etc.

- That American and Soviet libraries institute exchange of books and periodicals and get students of respective languages to translate them.

- That delegations continue to visit and interact with the Soviet Union and allow more time for in-depth exploration into specific areas of interest.

- That the Office of Education invite the Soviet Minister of Education to bring a delegation of teachers and administrators to the United States. Heretofore, scholars and researchers have visited.